

Deva Premal

Into Silence, the Meditation Music

Sounds True M1258D

(soundstrue.com or whiteswanmusic.com)



Devotees of the German-born New Age singer Deva Premal will relish this alluring compilation of some of her most sensitive mantra chants. Particularly moving is her achingly pure soprano in "Om Hraum Mitraya" ("May the light of friendship shine"), an ancient Sanskrit mantra celebrating the 12 spiritual gifts of the sun, which include illumination, healing abilities, and spiritual magnetism. "Om Asatoma" ("Take us from the false") states: "Take us from the false to truth / From darkness to light." This ancient Hindu prayer is found in a philosophical treatise from 800 B.C.E. Deva Premal wears all this learning lightly, and her hypnotic vocalizing makes age-old meditations sound fresh and immediate.

Irvin Mayfield and Ellis Marsalis

Love Songs, Ballads and Standards

Basin Street Records 0405

(basinstreetrecords.com or irvinmayfield.com)



More than just an excellent jazz CD, this collaboration between two New Orleans natives, young trumpeter Irvin Mayfield and his former piano teacher Ellis Marsalis, is a survivors' statement. *Love Songs*,

Ballads and Standards is dedicated to the memory of Mayfield's father, who perished in Hurricane Katrina. Irvin was born in New Orleans in 1977. His mother taught school in the Ninth Ward where, he recalls, she would "illuminate the larger purpose of art." As a boy, Irvin played organ at his local church, and by age 10 he had learned to play the hymn "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" on the trumpet. On this new CD, his renditions of jazz standards like Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight" and Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood" are exceptionally tender and intimate. His duo partner Marsalis, born in 1934, is the patriarch of a famous performing family which includes trumpeter Wynton and sax player Branford, but more pertinently, he has spent a lifetime teaching music in New Orleans. Marsalis' sage, sweetly meditative reflections at the keyboard exalt a place still associated with natural disaster and the tragic inadequacy of political response. Mayfield says, "The funeral portion of New Orleans is over. I'm looking for the rebuild and resurrection." Imbued with hard-won serenity, conscious of human suffering, *Love Songs, Ballads and Standards* will move and inspire all listeners to transcend their own personal challenges.

Bi Kidude

Zanzibara, Vol. 4: Diva of Zanzibari Music

Buda Musique 860141

(bn.com)



Zanzibar, an archipelago in the Indian Ocean that forms part of the East African nation of Tanzania, is home to Bi Kidude, who was born around 1921. A triumphant singer with the raspy voice of a village wise-woman, Bi's profound knowledge of herbs and remedies has given her a reputation as a healer, and her songs in the Swahili genre of Taarab (literally, "affecting music") offer

comforting and health-giving horse sense. On this rollicking, inspiring new CD, Bi sings about "Beru," a man who was "broken because he meddled in other people's affairs . . . He has lost all respect." Another song, "Muhogo wa Jang'ombe" ("Moonshine from the Suburbs") sagely advises female listeners: "Don't use abusive language against midwives / you might be pregnant at that very moment." Still touring to perform in France, England, and Japan, Bi explains: "When I sing I feel like a 14-year-old girl again . . . I sing with all my strength and continue to make people happy." The subject of a recent documentary feature film, *As Old as My Tongue: the Myth and Life of Bi Kidude* (asoldasmytongue.net), Bi is accompanied here by an ensemble containing violin, drum, and oud, the ancient Iraqi instrument praised for its healing powers. We feel nurtured and educated by this strong, experienced voice. One critic recently wrote about Bi, "She's still got the power."

Pierre Hantaï

François Couperin Harpsichord Works

Mirare MIR027 (amazon.com)



The composer François Couperin (1668–1733) and his fellow seventeenth-century Frenchmen believed, says historian Wilfrid Mellers, that for our own "spiritual health, as well as society's," we must be considerate of our fellow man. Grace and elegance, poise and balance were treasured, and this equilibrium is ideally translated in the magical playing of Frenchman Pierre Hantaï, one of the world's top virtuosos on his instrument. Couperin's "Les folies françaises" ("French Frenzies") is a series of short pieces, each representing a different human emotion, including ardor, hope, fidelity, and perseverance. Listening to this CD, we feel better about the potentials of human behavior.

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